

# UNCOVERING THE WRITERS' PURPOSES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOALS OF *THE JAKARTA POST*'S OPINION ARTICLES TOWARDS THE 2014 LEGISLATIVE ELECTION

Fitri Budi Suryani and Ahmad Hilal Madjidi

fitribudisuryani@gmail.com, hilalmadjidi@gmail.com

English Department, F.K.I.P., Muria Kudus University,  
Kudus

**Abstract:** During the open campaign of the 2014 Indonesian legislative election, the way how the writers of opinion articles in newspapers perform their writing in relation with the context of the campaign is an interesting phenomenon as the fact that people writing about social matters are inevitably influenced by the way they perceived them, as well as their choice of topics and the way they approach them, by their own social experiences and values and political commitments (Fairclough, 1992). This study is aimed at revealing the short term goals and long term goals of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* towards 2014 Indonesian legislative election. The data were collected from sixteen opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* during the open campaign. The result indicates that the number of articles with unparallel purpose is higher than that of articles with parallel purpose.

**Key words:** short term goals, long term goals, *The Jakarta Post* opinion articles, 2014 Indonesian legislative election.

**Abstrak:** Selama masa kampanye terbuka pemilihan umum anggota legislatif Indonesia tahun 2014, cara para penulis artikel opini menuliskan komentarnya pada surat kabar dalam konteks periode kampanye terbuka merupakan fenomena yang menarik berdasarkan fakta bahwa orang yang menuliskan permasalahan sosial tidak bisa terhindarkan dipengaruhi oleh persepsi mereka, pilihan topik dan bagaimana mereka memandangnya, oleh pengalaman sosial, nilai-nilai, dan komitmen politik mereka (Fairclough, 1992). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap tujuan jangka pendek dan tujuan jangka panjang komentar-komentar tentang pemilu legislatif tahun 2014 di surat kabar *The Jakarta Post*. Data penelitian berasal dari enam belas

*artikel opini di surat kabar The Jakarta Post selama masa kampanye terbuka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jumlah artikel yang memiliki tujuan yang tidak paralel lebih banyak daripada artikel yang memiliki tujuan paralel.*

**Kata kunci:** *tujuan jangka pendek, tujuan jangka panjang, artikel opini surat kabar The Jakarta Post, pemilihan umum anggota legislatif Indonesia tahun 2014.*

## INTRODUCTION

During the open campaign of the 2014 Indonesian legislative election, commentaries on the campaign colored printed media like newspapers. This commentaries mostly belong to opinion articles. The writers of opinion articles on newspapers can be political party activists, political observers or political experts. The way how the writers of the opinion articles in newspapers perform their writing in relation with the context of the open campaign period is an interesting phenomenon. This is because of the fact that people writing about social matters are inevitably influenced by the way they perceived them, as well as their choice of topics and the way they approach them, by their own social experiences and values and political commitments (Fairclough, 1992).

Since the open campaign is known as the period of "the last battle" before the election, the writers of opinion articles in newspapers will usually express their thoughts, values, and ideologies within their text related to the 2014 Indonesian legislative election. In other words, they try to realize their purposes through their writings thoroughly so as to achieve those purposes. As Connor (1996) notes, newspaper commentaries, including the editorials, are the best examples of persuasive writings. This means that newspaper commentaries have the purpose to persuade their readers on particular issues or matters.

However, not all newspaper commentaries or opinion articles might intend to persuade their readers since every text has purpose that can be grasped easily and directly as well as purpose that is hidden and needs to be explored further. According to Butt et al. (2001), every text has two kinds of purposes. They are the short term goal and long term goal. Short term goal deals with the immediate purpose of the production of the text, while the

latter refers to the text's place in the larger scheme of things. The long term goal is said to be rather more abstract compared with the short term goal.

This study is aimed at revealing the short term goals and long term goals of the opinion article in *The Jakarta Post* towards the 2014 legislative election. The opinion articles include both editorials and articles. In addition, they are limited only to the topics of the open campaign activities of the 2014 legislative election.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Text and Context

Text is influenced by two contexts, one of which is the context of situation or register. The concept of register is actually a theoretical view of language use on the basis of different situation which is known as context of situation (Eggins and Martin, 1997, pp. 237-243). Context of situation has three register variables, namely field, tenor, and mode.

Field concerns with what is happening or kind of action in its social nature. Meanwhile, tenor refers to the interactive roles involved in the text production that constitute who is taking part, what is his/ her status or discourse role. The last register variable, mode, deals with the organization of the text. In other words, it describes the channel in which the communication takes place, whether spoken, written or combination of these two channels. Those three variables of context of situation will always affect us in language choice in order to convey meaning as it is understood that language is essentially a system of meaning potential (Halliday, 1994).

Furthermore, Halliday and Hassan (1989) explain that field is used to reflect ideational meaning. this means that the field is expressed through the ideational function in the semantics. Tenor is used to reflect lexico grammatical features which carry interpersonal meanings or in other words tenor is expressed through interpersonal function in the semantics. The mode register variable is reflected in lexico grammatical features which carry textual meaning. Thus, mode is expressed through textual function in the semantics.

Since language is thought as a resource for making meaning (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2004), thus the three variables of context of situation, that is, field, tenor and mode are linked to the three main functions of language or semantic meta function which includes ideational meanings, interpersonal

meanings, and textual meanings. Semantically then, language is structured to make three kinds of meanings, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings (Halliday, 1994). The ideational meaning is concerned with the content or the proposition of the message. It can be grouped into experiential and logical subtypes. According to Eggins (2004), experiential meaning is expressed through the system of transitivity or process type, with the choice of process implicating associated participants roles and configurations. The interpersonal meaning is concerned with the interaction between the speaker/ the writer and addressee. This kind of meaning is mainly manifested in the level of clause through mood, modality and evaluation. Textual meaning is related with the organization of text in achieving its cohesion and coherence. This meaning is realized in lexico grammar through theme and rheme.

Butt et al. (2001) assert that the text and context of situation are related dynamically. By this, they mean that when the field, tenor, and mode of the context of situation of a text are acknowledged, the grammatical structure of the text can be predicted with a great deal of certainty. On the other hand, by knowing the grammatical structures of a text, the context of situation can be revealed.

#### **B. Short Term Goals and Long Term Goals**

Every text has their own purposes. This purpose can be revealed from the field of the context of situation. Since the field is realized through experiential meanings in the transitivity of the text, thus to find out the purposes of a text, the transitivity needs to be explored which means that the elements of process, participant, and circumstance should be analysed.

Butt et al. (2001) differentiate the purposes of a text into the short term goal and long term goal. Short term goal refers to the immediate purpose of the production of the text. The readers can easily grasp this kind of goal by reading the text at a glance. It is the first impression of purpose that the readers catch from the text they read. People do not need to have special or extensive knowledge or particular professional background to know this short term goal.

On the other hand, the long term goals are not easily identified by readers. To reveal the long term goals, readers need to place the text in the larger scheme of things. The long term goal is said to be rather more abstract compared with the short term goal. Because of the characteristics of the long

term goals, not all people can see this kind of purpose the first time they read the text. Besides needing to place the text in the larger scheme of things or in a broader perspective and context, people usually will be required to have special and extensive knowledge on particular issues and matters if they want to be able to reveal the long term goals.

Even though a text usually has the short term goals and long term goals, it does not mean that those goals will always be the same or parallel. There is a possibility for a text to have the short term goal which is far different from its long term goal. This condition will result in unparalleled short term goals and long term goals.

The causes of the unparalleled short term goals and long term goals may vary. The professional background of the writers may influence this condition. Besides, the intention of the writers towards particular topics might also result in the unparalleled short term goals and long term goals. Furthermore, the values and ideologies of the writers can be another reason for the short term goals to be different from the long term goals.

### C. Opinion Articles

Articles in newspapers can be differentiated based on who writes those articles. Articles which are written by regular contributors are called columns. Meanwhile, articles which are written by members of the community variously are called commentary or opinion. Editorials are articles which are written by newspaper editorial staffs ("Editorial", 2014). It means that editorial is not always written by the chief of the editor.

According to Lagonikos (2005), editorial is a type of opinion discourse which is written with the purpose of persuading the readers to accept new opinions. This implies that the content of the editorial is a kind of personal opinion of the writer. However, in writing new opinions, Van Dijk (2009) states that the writer should consider factual knowledge or public knowledge about specific events and the readers need to be familiar with this knowledge in order to understand the text.

Opinion articles have critical role and play an important communicative function because of their contributions to the media's role in formulating certain preferred view points about the world. The function of newspaper commentaries is to offer newspaper readers a distinctive and sometimes authoritative voice that will speak to the public directly about matters of public importance (Lavid et al, 2014).

#### D. Indonesian Legislative Election

Since the reformation era, Indonesian citizens have had two important elections. They are the election to elect Indonesian Legislative members or the so-called legislative election and the election to elect president and vice president. The main difference of the general election for electing legislative members in this reformation era from that in the previous era is the allowance to use several campaign methods by all participants which include the party and/or each candidate. The participants could hold limited meetings and face to face meetings, open meetings, use printed and electronic mass media, distribute campaign materials, install campaign instruments, and do other campaign activities as long as they do not break laws and regulations of the general election.

Although several campaign methods are allowed to be used, the open campaign is considered as the main method which attracts all general election participants and Indonesian society. This is because this campaign is considered to be critical event as they are given only 21 days for conducting this activity. The open campaigns of the 2014 legislative election were held from January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 until April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014. During those 21 days, all participants of the general election try to assure and persuade Indonesian people to elect them. In other words, it can be assumed that during 21 days of open campaign period, all political parties used as many materials, methods, and media as possible in their campaign activities. One of media that is popular and likely to be used is newspaper. The reason is because newspaper has commentary or opinion articles which belong to persuasive writings (Connor, 1996). In this context, the writers of opinion articles in newspaper can be political party activists, political observers or political experts.

#### METHOD

The method of this study is qualitative using systemic functional analysis. The data were collected from opinion articles that consisted of editorials and articles in *The Jakarta Post* during the open campaign. The time of the open campaign was from January 15<sup>th</sup> 2014 until April 5<sup>th</sup> 2014.

To collect the data, there were some steps taken. First the data were grouped into different areas like humanity, law, economics, politics, religion,

education, health, culture, entertainment, and environment. After that, the opinion articles from the political area only were sorted and then they were grouped into different topics. Those topics include presidential election, legislative election, political party, election logistics, campaign activities, election procedures, voters, and election commission. The next step was finally to select only those opinion articles that were related directly or indirectly with the open campaign activities of the 2014 Indonesian legislative election. Those opinion articles then became the data in this research. There were sixteen opinion articles towards the open campaign activities in the 2014 legislative election that derived from editorials and articles of *The Jakarta Post* as the data of this study. The following table presents the titles of those opinion articles.

**Table 1. Titles of the Opinion Articles towards the 2014 Legislative Election in *The Jakarta Post***

No	Title
1	Graft Allegations Engineered to Undermine Golkar
2	Political Parties Roll out Campaign
3	PDI-P Eyes Victory in Golkar, PKS Strongholds
4	PAN Aims High despite Declining Influence
5	Golkar Mulls Long-Term Alliance with PDI-P
6	Gerindra Rebuffs Claims It Is a Socialist Party
7	Party-Based Regional Heads Affect North Sumatra Election Vote Gains
8	PKS Face Uphill Battle to Woo Muslim Voters
9	Poor Candidate Relies to Friends Network
10	Hanura Pledge to Boost Business Climate
11	Campaign Period Ends in High
12	Gerindra, PDI-P Tangled in Complicated Relationship
13	PPP Calls for Bold Agricultural Reforms
14	Parties Fight over Support in Central Java
15	PDI-P Targeted as Campaign Heats up
16	PPP Tries New Recipe to Stop the Riot

To analyse the data, the field of the opinion articles were analysed. As the field is realized thorough experiential meanings in transitivity, thus elements of transitivity need to be analysed. Those elements analysed from the opinion articles were process, participant, and circumstance. From the analysis of the process, participant, and circumstance, the short term goals and long term goals were then revealed.



## FINDINGS

The result of the data analysis shows that not all long term goals in the opinion articles towards the open campaign activities of the 2014 legislative election are parallel with their short term goals. The summary of the data analysis can be seen in table 2 below.

**Table 2. Short term and Long term Goals of *The Jakarta Post* Opinion Articles Towards the Open Campaign Activities of the 2014 Indonesian Legislative Election**

Article	Short term Goal	Long term Goal
1	Explaining	Informing
2	Reporting	Informing
3	Informing	Persuading
4	Explaining	Persuading
5	Informing	Convincing
6	Explaining	Persuading
7	Informing	Influencing
8	Describing	Informing
9	Describing	Informing
10	Describing	Persuading
11	Describing	Informing
12	Describing	Informing
13	Describing	Informing
14	Describing	Persuading
15	Informing	Persuading
16	Informing	Convincing

It can be seen from the table above that the short term goals of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* during the open campaign of the 2014 legislative election comprise of four types. They are explaining, reporting, informing, and describing. Meanwhile, the long term goals identified are informing, persuading, convincing, and influencing.

The data analysis also reveals that not all short term goals are parallel with their long term goals. The number of the opinion articles in which their short term goals are parallel to their long term goals is 43,75%. On the other



hand, the opinion articles whose short term goals are not parallel with their long term goals constitute 56,25%.

The articles that have their short term goals and long term goals parallel are opinion articles 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13. Those articles belong to the short term goals of explaining, reporting, informing, and describing. Their long term goals fall on the same category, i.e informing. This kind of long term goal has similar function as well as features as the short term goals mentioned previously. This means by reading, for example opinion article 1, the readers can grasp the immediate purpose of the article as explaining. However, place in larger perspective and context, the article has the purpose of informing which is quiet similar to explaining. Therefore, it is said that the opinion article 1 has the short term goal which is parallel to its long term goal.

The same thing occurs with the opinion article 2 entitled 'Political Parties Roll out Campaign'. This article indicates the short term goal of reporting the political parties' activities in rolling out the legislative campaign. If the readers of the article try to view the article in bigger perspective and put it in larger context, they will still end up with similar article writer's purpose, that is to inform the ways political parties roll out their campaign during the legislative election. In other words, the short term goal and the long term goal of the opinion article 2 are parallel.

Another opinion article 8 also shows the parallel between the short term goal and its long term goal. Reading this opinion article entitled 'PKS Face Uphill Battle to Woo Moslem Voters', the readers will see that it has the short term goal of describing the large amount of effort done by PKS to attract moslem voters. When they place the opinion article in the larger scheme and context, they will still see that the purpose of the article is just informing them on the same matter. There is not much distinction between the short term goal and the long term goal of the opinion article 8. This applies the same for the other five opinion articles that signal the parallel between their short term goals and long term goals.

The intention of the writers of the opinion articles of the open campaign activities during the 2014 legislative election in *The Jakarta Post* to have parallel short term goals and long term goals seem to be simple and limited only to merely giving information. They just want to inform their readers on particular issues or matters that they think their readers need to know about. Therefore, it can be inferred that those writers might have no

subtle intention in writing their opinion articles other than just giving information to the readers.

The unparallel goals are found in nine opinion articles, that is, opinion articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, and 16. The short term goals of those articles consist of informing, explaining, and describing, whereas the long term goals belong to persuading, convincing, and influencing. Comparing the short term goals and the long term goals of those opinion articles, it can be seen that the immediate purpose of the article and the purpose of the article in the larger scheme are far different. Take example article 3 entitled 'PDI-P Eyes Victory in Golkar, PKS Strongholds' that has the short term goal of informing. By this, it means that the readers, at first glance of reading the article, will come up with information on the parties' competition dealing with their chance in winning the legislative election. Surprisingly, when the readers put the article in larger scheme and context, they will find out that the purpose of the article is no longer informing, but persuading them to choose particular parties. This long term goal of persuading is realized through the short term goal of informing how the political parties compete one another during the legislative election. Thus, there is unparallel between the short term goal and the long term goal in the article opinion 3.

The opinion article 10 with its title 'Hanura Pledge to Boost Business Climate' reveals the short term goal of informing, that is, the readers will catch its immediate purpose of the article as giving them information on Hanura's view on nowadays and future economy of Indonesia. But when the readers try to see the opinion article in its larger context, they will see that there is a hidden purpose of the article that intends to influence them on seeing the party as a party that have well economy view and plan for Indonesia.

From the opinion articles that have the unparallel short term goals with their long term goals, it can be seen that most of the short term goals of those opinion articles are informing. Meanwhile, those opinion articles' long term goals include persuading, influencing, and convincing. Even though the kinds of the long term goals in the unparallel opinion articles are more various than those in the parallel opinion articles which only have informing as their long term goal, the opinion articles with unparallel purposes actually refer to similar purpose. That purpose is intended to have influence on the readers on certain matters, either by persuading the readers to do something like choosing and voting for particular party, or convincing the readers on some issues in order to have good image in the readers' eyes. However, at the

end the purpose is still the same, that is to gain voters for particular political party in facing the 2014 Indonesia legislative election.

The readers' ability to uncover these hidden purposes or the long term goals of those articles will then depend on the readers' background knowledge and their wide perspective. The readers' professional background might also contribute in the ability to see the long term goals of the opinion articles. The readers who do not know much about political issues and have no political background at all might have difficulty to see if an article brings with it different long term goal from its short term goal. On the other hand, those who are actively and intensely involved in political arena might find it easy to identify whether an article contains long term goal that is unparallel with its short term goal.

The data also shows that the number of the opinion articles which have parallel short term goals and long term goals is lower than that of the unparallel ones. This indicates that not all opinion articles, when written as opinions, have the long term goals that are quiet similar with the shor term goals. Many writers of opinion articles prefer to have the other purpose other than their immediate purpose of writing. This other purpose surely is far different from the purpose that their readers might have in their first impression when reading the article.

The reasons why those writers have unparallel short term goals and long term goals might vary. This is due to their various background profession as those opinion articles can be written by political-party activists, political observers, or political experts. Another reason for those writers having the unparallel goals may be caused by their having subtle intention on the legislative election. This intention can be personal or group to win particular legislative candidate or particular party. The values and ideologies held by the writers might influence to result in unparallel short term goals and long term goals as well. Apart from various reasons the writers hold for having unparallel goals in their articles, this fact reveals that text might bring with it more than purposes.

## CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* towards the open campaign activities in the 2014 legislative election reveal two kinds of purposes. The first purpose is parallel purpose, that is,

the short term goals of the opinion articles that have similarity with the long term goals. The second purpose constitutes the unparallel purpose in which the short term goals of the opinion articles are different from the long term goals. This shows that a text might have more than one purpose.

In addition, the number of the parallel purpose of the opinion articles is lower than that of the unparallel ones. The higher number of the unparallel purpose opinion articles indicates that dealing with the 2014 legislative election, the writers of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* might have subtle intention. This can also be caused by the writers' values and ideologies as well as the writers' various background professions which include political-party activists, political observers, and experts. As a result, they approach particular issue or matter in different way from their own background that makes the short term goals and long term goals of their opinion articles distinct.

However, not all the readers of the opinion articles might be able to grasp the long term goals easily. They need to have the ability to place the text in the larger scheme, perspective, or context if they are to reveal the long term goals. Therefore, it requires the readers to have extensive knowledge on the issues or matters written in the opinion articles. Furthermore, knowing the background of the writers is also a necessary information to find out the long term goals as each writer of the opinion articles has their own intention when writing their articles dealing with the 2014 legislative election.

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